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## CONSTRUCTIVE STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE OF WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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### IV. THE HISTORICAL WRITINGS OF THE PRIESTLY SCHOOL.

#### III. THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

##### § 232. The Scope of the History in Ezra-Nehemiah.—

- Ezra 1:1-4.** Note that the narrative in these books (1) *begins* with the decree of Cyrus permitting the exiled Jews to return from Babylon; (2) *closes* with an account of the activities of Nehemiah during his second visit to Jerusalem; (3) that it covers a period, therefore, of about one hundred years; and (4) that comparatively few of the events and movements belonging to this period are treated in the history, much being passed over in silence.
- Ezra 1:5-11; 2:1-70.** Observe the order of presentation: (1) The account of the *return* gives the decree of Cyrus, a statement about the gifts sent to the temple, and a long list of the names of the returning exiles; nothing being said of the journey itself. Then follows (2) the account of the building of an altar to Jehovah and of the attempt to rebuild the temple; with (3) the story of the successful opposition of the enemies of the Jews. (4) The next section recounts (*a*) the renewed effort to build the temple, under the leadership of Haggai and Zechariah; (*b*) the renewed opposition on the part of the enemy and the resulting correspondence with Darius; (*c*) the completion of the work, and the festivities connected with the dedication of the restored temple. Then (5), passing over in silence a period of about sixty years, the historian gives the story of Ezra's visit to Jerusalem, including the letter of authority given to him by Artaxerxes, a list of the names of all who accompanied Ezra, and a list of the presents sent up from Babylon for the temple. (6)
- Ezra 3:1-4:24.**
- Ezra 5:1-6:22.**
- Ezra 7:1-8:36.**
- Ezra 9:1-10:44.** The last section of the book of Ezra deals with Ezra's

efforts to put a stop to the marriages of Jews with foreigners, and gives much space to Ezra's prayer in reference to this subject, and to a list of the names of those who had married foreign wives.

Notice that the book of Nehemiah (1) opens with the account of Nehemiah's purpose to visit Jerusalem, and his success in securing the sanction and the support of Artaxerxes the king. Then follows (2) the narrative of Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem, his tour of inspection made under cover of darkness, and his success in arousing the citizens to repair the walls of the city. (3) At this point is inserted a list of those who engaged in the work, with careful indication of the special portion performed by each family or group; together with the efforts of the Samaritans to hinder the work and the measures taken by Nehemiah to bring the plans of the Samaritans to nought. Thereupon (4) comes a digression concerning Nehemiah's championship of the cause of the oppressed debtors among the Jews, and his own policy of refraining from levying upon the people for his support as former governors had done. (5) The story of the building of the walls is then continued by the story of various conspiracies made by the Samaritans against the life and the influence of Nehemiah until the work of building was completed and the city was properly guarded. (6) A list of those who had returned from exile is next included, this list being a duplicate of one given in Ezra. Upon this list follows (7) the account of Ezra's introduction of the law and of its adoption by the people in public assembly. Then comes (8) a list of those who signed the new covenant and an account of the terms of the covenant itself, with still other lists of names. (9) A description of the ceremonies in connection with the dedication of the wall is then given. (10) To this are subjoined brief statements concerning the provision made by Nehemiah for the support of the temple ministry and concerning the expulsion of foreigners. The narrative closes (11) with the reforms in the interests of the temple and its ministry, sabbath observance, and the prohibition of mixed marriages, carried through by Nehemiah after his return from a visit to Babylon.

Neh. 1: 1-2: 8.

Neh. 2: 9-20.

Neh. 3: 1-32.

Neh. 4: 1-23.

Neh. 5: 1-19.

Neh. 6: 1-7: 4.

Neh. 7: 5-73; cf.  
Ezra 2: 1-70.

Neh. 8: 1-9: 38.

Neh. 10: 1-27; 10:  
28-39.

Neh. 11: 1-12: 26.

Neh. 12: 27-43.

Neh. 12: 44-13: 3.

Neh. 13: 4-31.

§ 233. **Constructive Work.**—Prepare a statement, based upon a study of the outline of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, concerning the purpose of these narratives, as it appears (*a*) in the kind of matter selected for treatment; (*b*) in the relative amount of prominence given to the various subjects; (*c*) in the places assigned respectively to Ezra and to Nehemiah.

§ 234. **The Unity of the Books of Ezra-Nehemiah.**—Consider the following facts: (1) Some most ancient Jewish and early Christian writers speak of the book of Ezra in such a way as to indicate that they include with it the present book of Nehemiah.<sup>1</sup> (2) The old Jewish commentators, *e. g.*, Rashi and Aben Ezra, pass from Ezra 10:44 to Neh. 1:1 without any break such as is customary in passing from one book to another. (3) The Massoretic notes attached to each book in the Hebrew Bible are not found at the close of Ezra, but do appear at the end of Nehemiah, and there give facts showing that the Massoretes regarded Ezra-Nehemiah as one book; *e. g.*, they declare Neh. 3:12 to be the middle verse of this book. (4) The sections into which the Hebrew text was divided by the Massoretes for use in the synagogue service show that they thought of Ezra-Nehemiah as a single book, one section being Ezra 8:35—Neh. 2:1. (5) The two books are united in the Septuagint translation.

§ 235. **Constructive Work.**—In the light of these facts, and the additional fact that the two books treat the same period, are concerned with the same general problems, and furnish much evidence pointing to their having been edited by the same hand, formulate an extended answer to the question: Shall we consider the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, now treated separately, as a single literary production?

See especially RYLE, *Ezra and Nehemiah* ("Cambridge Bible"), pp. i–xiii.

§ 236. **The Unity of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.**—<sup>2</sup> Chron. 36:22 f.; *cf.* Ezra 1:1–3. What is the significance of the following facts? (1) The closing verses of Chronicles are repeated at the opening of the book of Ezra. (2) Both works are compilations from various sources (see §§ 221, 228). (3) Both give especial prominence to genealogical lists (see §§ 223;

<sup>1</sup> So, *e. g.*, Talmud, *Baba bathra*, folio 14, c. 2; Melito, bishop of Sardis (*ca.* 180 A. D.), cited in EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccles.*, IV, 26.

230, (1)). (4) The two works greatly resemble each other in general literary style and in their vocabulary (see §§ 225; 230, (4)). (5) The two exhibit the same absorbing interest in matters relating to the temple and its service; *e. g.*, (a) great prominence is given to the Levites, who are mentioned more than sixty times in Ezra-Nehemiah and about one hundred times in Chronicles; (b) in both the musical service is emphasized; (c) in both prayer is highly esteemed, and hence is frequently placed in the mouths of Israel's great leaders; (d) religious festivals and ceremonies are described in detail by both; (e) the porters are mentioned as a part of the temple staff nowhere except in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, in which books they are often so spoken of; (f) the Nethinim, mentioned frequently in Ezra-Nehemiah, are mentioned in no other book except Chronicles; (6) Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles come from the same period (see §§ 220, 227); (7) Ezra-Nehemiah takes up the history at the point where it stops in Chronicles and continues it until the building of the second temple is narrated, the two books, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, thus constituting a history of the temple and its worship from the time of the building of Solomon's temple until the restoration of worship in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

See, *e. g.*, RYLE, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. xxvi ff.; REUSS, *Das Alte Testament*, pp. 8 ff.; KÖNIG, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, p. 285; DRIVER, *Introduction, etc.*, pp. 516 f.; SAYCE, *Introduction to Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*, pp. 29 f.; *cf. Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, pp. 537 f., 548.

§ 237. **Constructive Work.**—Prepare a statement discussing the explanation of these facts, whether (1) by the supposition that the two editors, working in the same period and upon the same subjects and with the same interests, used the same methods and arrived at similar results; or (2) by the supposition that the two books are really one, being the product of the same editor's labors.

§ 238. **The Date of Ezra-Nehemiah** (*cf. § 220*).—Note (1) the use of the expression "the days of Nehemiah;" does the writer not seem to regard these days as long past? (2) the use of the title "king of Persia," in view of the fact that contemporary sources when speaking of

Ezra 3:8-12;  
Neh. 8:7-13;  
*cf. Chron.*

Ezra 3:10 f.;  
Neh. 12:27, 36,  
46; *cf. Chron.*  
Ezra 9:6-15;  
Neh. 1:4; 4:9;  
*cf. Chron.*  
Ezra 6:19-22;  
Neh. 12:27-43;  
*cf. 2 Chron.*,  
5:1-7:10  
Ezra 2:42; Neh.  
12:25, 45, 47;  
*cf. Chron.*

Ezra 7:7; 8:17;  
Neh. 3:26;  
10:28; *cf.*  
1 Chron. 9:2.

Neh. 12:26, 47.

Ezra 1:1 f., 8;  
3:7; 4:3, 5, 7,  
24; 6:14; 7:1.

Hag. 1: 1, 15;  
Zech. 7: 1; Ezra  
7: 27 f.; 8: 1, 22,  
25, 36; Neh.  
1: 11; 2: 1 ff.;  
5: 4, 14; 6: 7;  
13: 6.

Neh. 12: 10 f., 22;  
cf. 13: 4, 28;  
Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI,  
vii, 8.

Neh. 12: 22.

Neh. 12: 23.

Ezra 4: 6-23;  
7: 1-10; etc.

Persian monarchs use simply "the king;" does not this suggest that the Persian dominion was a thing of the past in the writer's time? the words "of Persia" would be superfluous while the Persian empire was supreme, but entirely appropriate after its overthrow; (3) the reference to Jaddua, the high-priest, who lived three generations later than Eliashib, the contemporary of Nehemiah; this points to a time as late as the days of Alexander the Great for Jaddua, and the phrase "the days of Jaddua," would seem to indicate a date long past; (4) the reference to "the reign of Darius, the Persian," as a period some time past; it is generally agreed that the king referred to is Darius Codomannus, 336-332 B. C.; (5) the reference to "the book of the chronicles" which is said to have contained the register of the Levites as far down as the high-priesthood of Johanan, the son of Eliashib; (6) the treatment of the sources, which is such as no contemporary historian would have dreamed of (*cf.* § 229).

§ 239. **Constructive Work.**—Discuss the significance of these facts; and determine whether they point (1) to the work of a later editor, who inserted all these allusions to late history in a book that had been written at an earlier period, or (2) to the probability that the book as a whole was not compiled and edited until a time somewhere about 300 B. C.

See, *e. g.*, RYLE, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. xxiii ff.; DRIVER, *Introduction, etc.*, p. 545; BAUDISSIN, *Einleitung in die Bücher des Alten Testaments*, pp. 266 ff.

§ 240. **The Sources of Ezra-Nehemiah.**—In support of the position that Ezra-Nehemiah is the work of an editor who compiled largely from existing sources, consider (1) the many cases of abrupt transition from one topic or incident to another, an abruptness which is natural in a work made up of extracts from older works placed side by side, but hard to account for in a work originating from the same hand; (2) the frequent change from the third to the first person, and *vice versa*, in closely related sections of the work, without any indication of reason for the change; (3) the presence of two large sections written in Aramaic, without any apparent reason for the change of speech; (4) the presence of lists of names

Ezra 2: 1; 5: 1;  
7: 1; 9: 1; Neh.  
1: 1; 7: 73b;  
12: 27; 13: 4.

Ezra 4: 8-6: 18;  
7: 12-26.

Neh. 7: 6-73; 11:  
3-36; 12: 1-26.

which have no close connection with the context to which they belong; (5) the use of important names in such a way as to imply that they had occurred in some previous context from which they are now severed; (6) the marked differences in style and language appearing in various parts of the narrative; (7) the fact that all the other historical books of the Old Testament are compilations; for the book of Chronicles especially see § 221; (8) the allusion to the "books of the chronicles," apparently a temple-register from which the editor obtained some materials.

As materials which the editor seems to have derived from earlier sources may be noted (1) the decree of Cyrus permitting the exiles to return home; (2) the Aramaic sections containing (*a*) the letter sent by the Jews' enemies to Artaxerxes; (*b*) the king's reply; (*c*) the account of the building of the temple in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, with certain letters that passed between Jerusalem and Babylon with reference to it; (*d*) the firman of Artaxerxes endowing Ezra with such authority as he desired; (3) various lists, including (*a*) the vessels of the temple; (*b*) the Jews who come back from exile with Zerubbabel; (*c*) the men who married foreign wives; (*d*) the builders of the wall; (*e*) the signers of the covenant; (*f*) the dwellers in Jerusalem and in other cities; (*g*) the priests and Levites; (4) the account of the adoption of the law and the new covenant in the time of Nehemiah; (5) certain portions of the narrative which use the first person and seem to have belonged to the memoirs of Ezra; (6) similar sections which seem to have been taken from the memoirs of Nehemiah.

§ 241. The Treatment of the Sources in Ezra-Nehemiah.

—Consider (1) the form of the decree of Cyrus with reference to the return of the exiles as it is given in two different places in Ezra, and note the differences in phraseology and contents; is it probable that there were two copies of the decree in existence differing so much as these, or is it more natural to ascribe the variations to

Ezra 2:2; 3:2;  
4:5, 6; 6:15;  
Neh. 12:22, 32.

Neh. 12:23.

Ezra 1:1-4.

Ezra 4:7-16; 4:  
17-24; 5:1-  
6:18; 7:12-26.

Ezra 1:9-11;  
Ezra 2:1-70 and  
Neh. 7:6-73;  
Ezra 10:20-44;  
Neh., chap. 3;  
10:1-27; 11:3-  
36; 12:1-26.

Neh. 7:73<sup>b</sup>—  
10:39.

Ezra 7:27-8:34;  
9:1-15.

Neh., chaps. 1-6;  
7:1-73<sup>a</sup>; 12:27-  
43; 13:4-31.

Ezra 1:2 ff.; cf.  
6:3 ff.

Neh., chaps. 8-10;  
cf. Ezra, chaps.  
7-10.

Ezra, chaps. 4-6;  
Neh., chaps.  
4, 6.

Ezra 2:1-3:1a;  
cf. Neh. 7:6-73.

Neh. 13:25; cf.  
Ezra, chap. 10.

Ezra 9:9.

Ezra, chap. 2;  
8:1-20; 10:18-  
44; Neh. 3:1-32;  
7:8-65; 10:1-  
27; 11:3-12:26.

the hand of the editor? (2) the fact that a large section of Nehemiah appears to belong to the memoirs of Ezra, being closely connected with them in the period with which they deal, in tone, and in phraseology; (3) the fact that the opposition of the Samaritans to the Jewish community is all crowded together at the beginning of the narrative, though, as a matter of fact, the dates given show that this opposition extended over a period of about eighty years and grew more and more bitter; (4) the fact that there are more than one hundred variations in the two copies of the same genealogical list, and, in particular, that the numbers differ oftener than they agree.

Consider now (5) the evidence pointing to the conclusion that Ezra's expedition really *followed* that of Nehemiah instead of preceding it, as the editor's narrative reads; *e. g.*, (a) Nehemiah's memoirs make no allusion to any previous work of Ezra; (b) those who came back with Ezra seem to have taken no part in the rebuilding of the walls, as they certainly would have done had they been present; (c) Ezra's measures, especially with reference to intermarriage, all seem more decisive than those of Nehemiah, which have the appearance of being tentative; (d) the fact that, according to the editor's narrative, Ezra's law was not promulgated until after the arrival of Nehemiah, and that no explanation of this long delay is offered by the editor; (e) the fact that Ezra gives thanks to Jehovah that the walls have been rebuilt at a time when Nehemiah, the builder of the walls, had not yet appeared on the scene, according to the editor's narrative. What motive could have led to such a rearrangement of the documentary sources? Is it sufficient to say that it was for the purpose of giving Ezra, the priest, precedence over Nehemiah, the layman?

§ 242. **The Style of Ezra-Nehemiah.**—As indicative of the editor's tastes and interests note (1) the large amount of *genealogical* material he incorporates into his narrative, giving lists of those who took part in the first return from exile, of those who helped build the wall, of those



who dwelt in Jerusalem, etc., etc.; (2) the similar fondness for *statistical* statements, as evidenced in connection with the above lists and on every other possible occasion; (3) the numerous *chronological* data with which his work abounds. In connection with these characteristics, recall the similar features seen to have been characteristic of the books of Chronicles (see §§ 223, 224). Consider (4) the style of the editor's own contributions to the work as distinguished from the style of the sources used by him.

§ 243. **Constructive Work.**—Examine lists of phrases and words peculiar to the various sources, and read each source separately, as far as possible, in order that its literary style may impress itself upon your mind. Then treat the editor's own contribution in the same way, and compare its style with that of the editorial contributions to the books of Chronicles, with a view to the light that may be thrown by such a comparison upon the question of the unity of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

See, *e. g.*, RYLE, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. xviii f., xxviii f.; DRIVER, *Introduction, etc.*, pp. 546 ff., 553; GEISSLER, *Die literarische Beziehungen der Esramemoiren, insbesondere zur Chronik und den hexateuchischen Quellschriften* (1899).

§ 244. **The Religion of Ezra-Nehemiah.**—If Ezra-Nehe-miah is the result of a compiler's work, the religious interests of the compiler must be looked for in three directions: (1) the nature of the subjects he selects for treatment; (2) the relative prominence given by him to various matters; (3) the religious tone of the material contributed by himself. In reference to (1) it may be noted that the subjects treated are all of a religious character, such matters as are not in themselves distinctively religious being given a religious interpretation, *e. g.*, the building of the walls and the movement against inter-marriages with foreigners. As to (2) we may note the great prominence given to the temple and its affairs, the important place in the community assigned to priests and Levites, and the large amount of attention bestowed upon matters of ritual, descriptions of religious ceremonies, and the like. Concerning (3) we observe the priestly interest dominant in the editor's work, and that

Ezra 1: 10 f.;  
2: 64-69; 6: 16-18;  
7: 22; 8: 26 ff., 35; Neh. 5: 17, 18; 7: 66-72.

Ezra 1: 1; 3: 1, 6, 8;  
4: 6 f., 24; 6: 15;  
7: 1, 7-9; 8: 31 ff.; 10: 9, 16 f.;  
Neh. 1: 1; 2: 1, 11; 5: 14; 6: 15;  
7: 73; 8: 2 f., 13, 17 f.; 9: 1; 13: 6.

Neh. 12: 27-43;  
Ezra, chaps. 9, 10.

Ezra 1: 2-11; 2: 68 ff.; chap. 3;  
Neh. 3: 4-14;  
Ezra 6: 16-22;  
Neh. 12: 27-47;  
Ezra 2: 40-63;  
3: 8-10, 12; 7: 7, 11-13, 24; 8: 15-20; 10: 18 ff.;  
Neh. 12: 1-26.

Ezra 6: 16-22;  
7: 1-10; 8: 35 f.;  
Neh. 12: 44-47;  
13: 1-3.

the Priestly Code serves as the standard in all matters of ritual and worship.

In general, is there any appreciable difference between the religious ideals and feelings of the editor of Ezra-Nehemiah and those of the Chronicler (*cf.* § 227)? If not, is not this a strong indication of the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles?

#### § 245. Literature to be Consulted.

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#### § 246. Supplementary Topics.

1. Make a careful comparison of the parallel passages, Ezra 2:1—3:1a and Neh. 7:6-23, noting and classifying the variations in the two lists.
2. Analyze Ezra-Nehemiah carefully, with a view to determining for yourself the sources of the various materials of which it is composed and the historical value of the narrative as it has been presented by the editor.

*Cf.* especially TORREY, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*; GUTHE, *Ezra and Nehemiah* ("Polychrome Bible," 1901); SIEGFRIED, *Esra, Nehemia und Esther* ("Handkommentar z. A. T."), pp. 7-14; KOSTERS, *Het Herstel van Israel in het Perzische Tijdvak* (1894, Germ. transl. 1895); CARL HOLZHEY, *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia; Untersuchung ihres literarischen und geschichtlichen Charakters* (1902); MEYER, *Die Entstehung des Judenthums*; SCHRADER, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1867, pp. 460-504; VAN HOONACKER, *Néhémie et Esdras*; J. O. BOYD, "The Documents of the Book of Ezra," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 1900, pp. 414-37.

3. Compare the canonical book of Ezra with the apocryphal book, Esdras I, noting (1) the materials common to both, (2) the materials peculiar to each; and consider the relative value of each as historical sources.

See, e. g., H. HOWORTH, "A Criticism of the Sources and Relative Importance and Value of the Canonical Book of Ezra and the Apocryphal Book Known as Esdras I," *Transactions of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists*, Vol. II (1893), pp. 68-85; MOULTON, "Über die Überlieferung und den text-kritischen Werth des dritten Esrabuches," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. XIX, pp. 209-58;

XX, 1-35; BERTHOLET, *Esra und Nehemia*, p. xvi; SIEGFRIED, *Esra, Nehemia und Esther*, pp. 14 f.

4. Study the contents of the numerous genealogical lists in Ezra-Nehemiah from the point of view of (1) their origin, (2) their historical value, (3) their purpose.

See SMEND, *Die Listen der Bücher Esra und Nehemia* (1881).

5. Study the descriptions of priestly ceremonies, and customs, the provision made for the support of the temple and its ministry, and all other references to laws and usages of worship, and note the points of contact with the codes of worship, with a view to determining which stratum of laws is reflected by the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah.

6. Consider the fact that certain portions of Ezra-Nehemiah are written in Aramaic, and the best explanation of this fact.

See, *e. g.*, BERTHOLET, *op. cit.*, p. xv; SIEGFRIED, *op. cit.*, p. 7; RYLE, *op. cit.*, p. xx; BAUDISSIN, *Einleitung*, p. 283.